



Thucydides' Peloponnesian War

Theory of War and Strategy

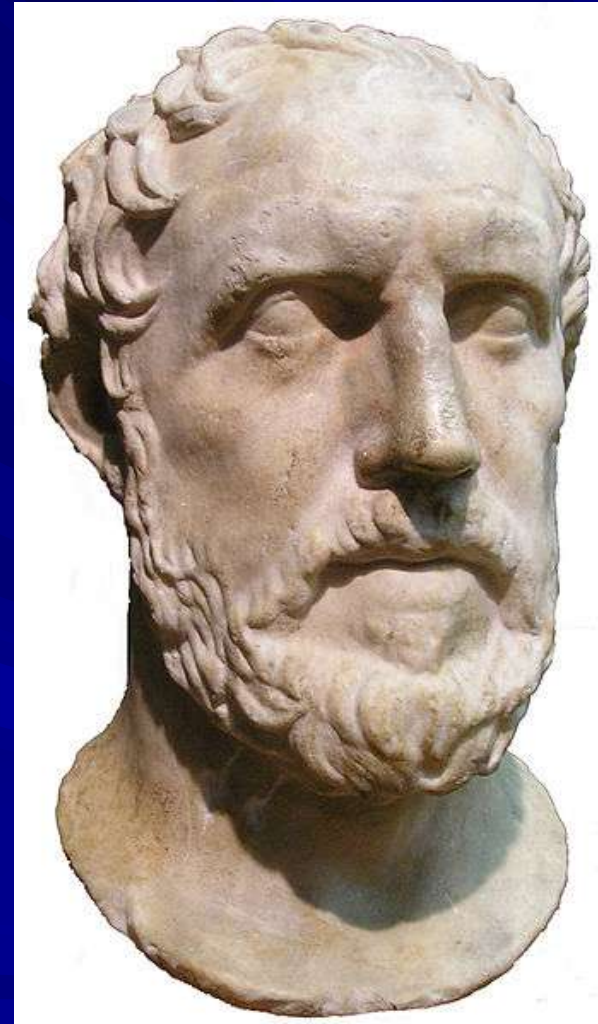
George Marshall, 1947

“I doubt seriously whether a man can think with full wisdom and with deep convictions regarding certain of the basic issues today who has not at least reviewed in his mind the period of the Peloponnesian War and the fall of Athens.”

Thucydides

Son of Olorus

- c. 460-398 B.C.E.
- Citizen of Athens, admirer of Pericles
- High social status, independent means
- Elected general in 424, subsequently exiled
- Returns to Athens in 404 to complete history



The Pentecontaetia

- 490-479, Persian Wars (battles of Marathon, 490; Salamis, 480; Plataea, 479)
- 479, founding of Delian League
- 445, the Thirty Years' Peace
- 431, Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War

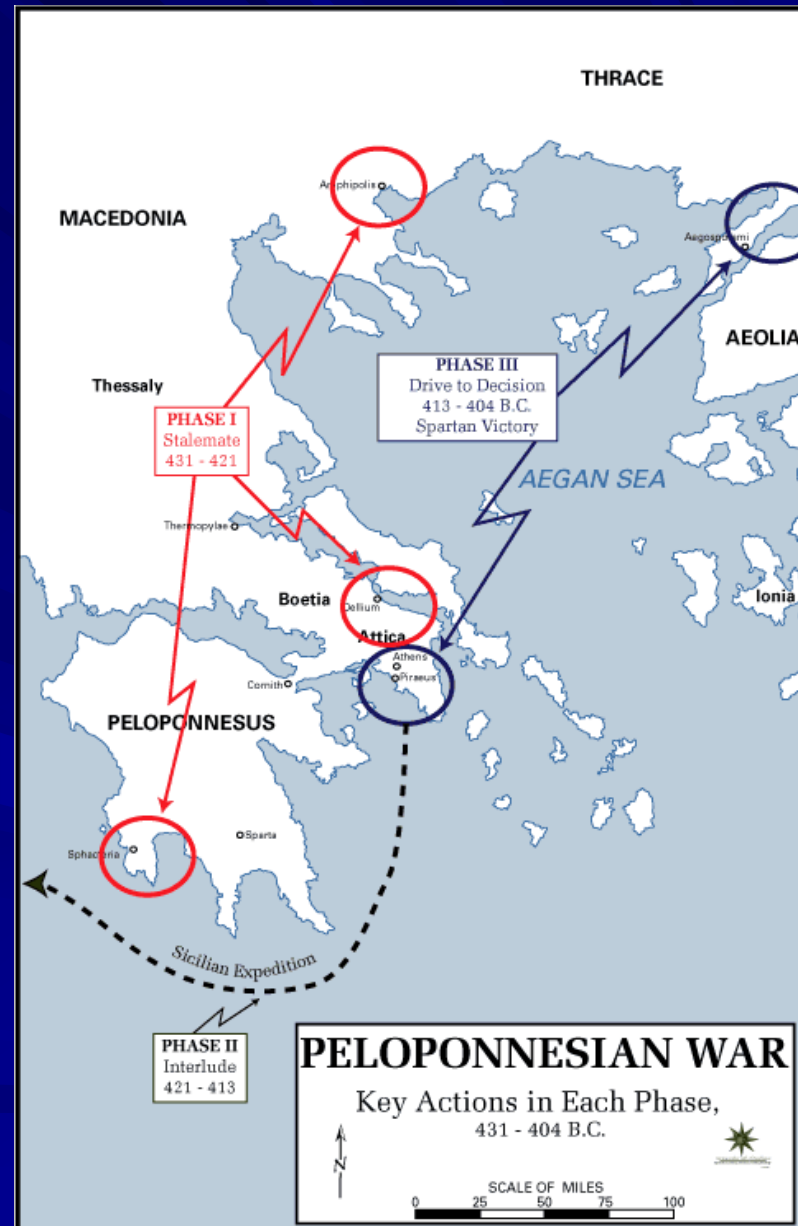


The Contending Alliances



The Peloponnesian War, 431-404 BCE

- The Archidamian War 431-421: (Great Plague of Athens, 430; Mytilene debate, 427; Fall of Pylos, 424; Fall of Amphipolis, 424; Peace of Nicias, 421)
- The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition 421-413: (Battle of Mantinea, 418; Melian Dialogue, 416; Sicilian Expedition, 415-413)
- The Ionian War, 413-404: (Oligarchy of 400 in Athens, 411; Battle of Syme, 411; Battle of Cyzicus, 410; Battle of Arginusae, 406; Battle of Aegospotami, 405; Athens surrenders, 404)



Hoplite Warfare



The Fall of Pylos, 424 BCE



The Battle of Mantinea, 418 BCE

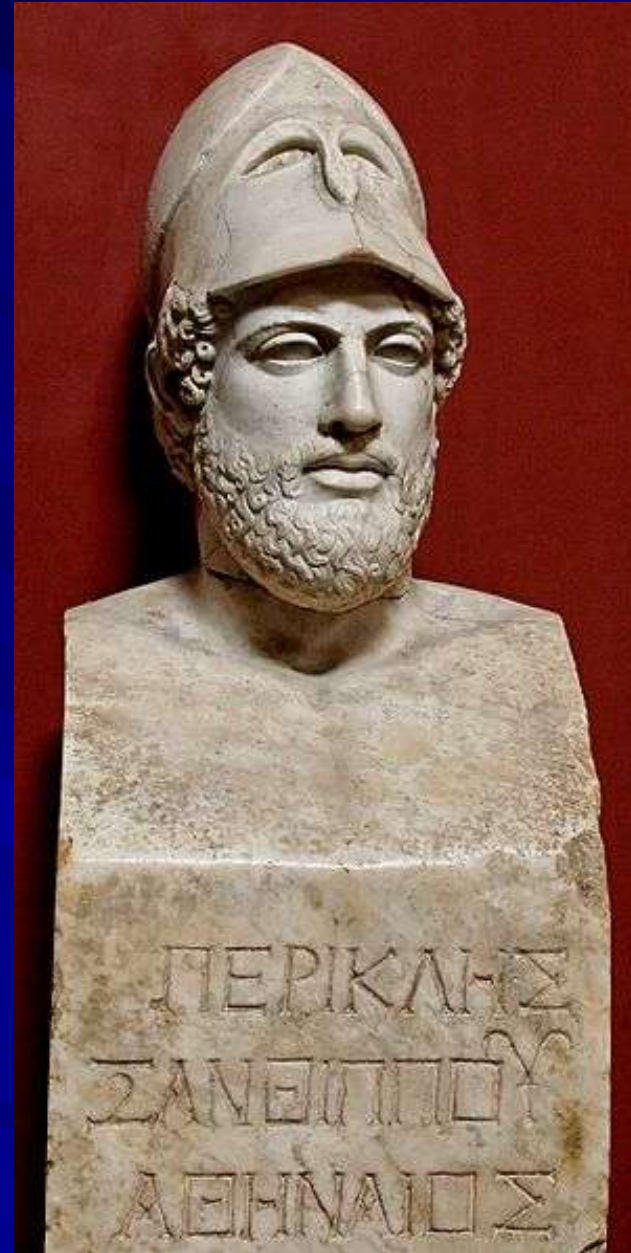


The Sicilian Expedition, 415-413 BCE



Recurrent Problems in Strategy

- What is War?
- The Causes of War
- War and Culture
- The Strategic Level of Warfare
- Ethical and Moral Context
- Conflict Termination



What is War?

- “War is the father and the king of all ... war is universal, and strife is justice” Heraclitus, c. 500 BCE
- “In peace and prosperity states have better sentiments, ... but war proves a rough master that brings most men’s characters to a level with their fortunes.”



The Causes of War

- **Structural Causation:**

“The growth of Athenian power and the fear it provoked in Sparta ...”

- **Complex Causation:**

“Fear, interests, and honor ...” Multiple causes, chance and contingency.



War and Culture

- Cultural sensitivity- and savvy-helps to decide strategic outcomes
- Athens and Sparta: Divergent polities
- Greek and Barbarian: Divergent civilizations



Contrasting Strategic Cultures

SPARTA



- Land Power
- Agrarian
- Oligarchic
- Status Quo
- Diffident
- Moderate
- “Quietude”

ATHENS



- Sea Power
- Commercial
- Democratic
- Revisionist
- Confident
- Excessive
- “Hyper Activity”

The Strategic Level of Warfare

- **Strategy is Comprehensive:**
Multiple variables affect outcomes
- **Strategy is Dynamic:**
Strategic must be constantly adapted and recast
- **Unpredictability:**
“War, as it continues, becomes an affair of chance ...”



Ethical and Moral Context

- **Power and Purpose:**

“You know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they will and the weak suffer what they must”

- **The War Convention:**

“You should not destroy what is our common protection, namely, the privilege of being allowed in danger to invoke what is fair and right.”

- **Interest and Justice:**

History as tragedy



Conflict Termination

- The Thirty Years' Peace (445):

Condominium, arbitration and a Pan-Hellenic Congress—a great power concert?

- The Peace of Nicias (421):

A “treacherous armistice” ?

- Capitulation:

An Athenian “center of gravity”

- Who wins the Peloponnesian War?

